

Victim Compensation Connection

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From the Desk of Karen McGagin, Executive Officer

The turn of the year offers us an opportunity to reflect on the past year and what we have to look forward to in the New Year. Looking back on 2005, the themes for the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board have been changed in preparation for more change. There are many new faces here, and many familiar ones with new challenges and responsibilities.



Karen McGagin

Our efforts this year focused on improving our business process and on enhancing our relationships with our partners in the field of victim services. Our new Compensation and Restitution System (CaRES) is being forged in a firestorm of activity and will debut in June 2006, but new developments don't stop there. Every day we make changes to improve the way we deliver our services, both in the compensation program, and in the government claims program. This year we convened a Victim Compensation Program Advisory Committee. We developed new seminars on compensation services for victim advocates. We developed new restitution training and tools for probation officers and prosecutors. We have a new logo, a new look, and new content for our publications. We've embarked on developing a new strategic plan to build a roadmap for the next few years of change.

These changes and improvements share a theme: customer service. Customer service is the cornerstone of every decision that we make. The American Heritage dictionary states that a cornerstone is not just a block of granite. Rather, it's an "indispensable and fundamental basis" for something, and it's certainly the basis for our programs.

Our purpose is to serve the public and our customers: claimants, service providers, advocates, and other agencies. Management and leadership consultant Peter Drucker once said, "The single most important thing to remember about any enterprise is that there are no results inside its walls. The result of a business is a satisfied customer."

Every effort we make in 2006, and beyond, will begin and end with the question, "Have we done the best we can to satisfy our customers?"

One of the highlights of the last few months was the opportunity I had to attend the national conference of state victim assistance and compensation administrators in Albuquerque. This annual conference affords an opportunity for federal VOCA administrators and program directors from across the nation to meet and discuss new trends and developing issues in compensation. I heard much praise for the good work all of us are doing here in California.

New VCGCB Logo and Brochure Suite Unveiled

The VCGCB is excited to end 2005 with a new logo and a new look. This refreshing change to the face of the VCGCB reflects our commitment to excellent customer service. Along with the new logo, the VCGCB debuted five new brochures to assist victims of crime. The first half of each brochure provides information in English. Flip the brochure over, and the same information is available in Spanish.

These brochures have been distributed to Victim Witness Centers throughout California and will be on hand at various outreach and training events. "By improving our outreach materials, we can improve the quality of service for our customers and the providers who serve them," said Executive Officer Karen McGagin.

Surveys were distributed along with the brochures. Feedback from the surveys will assist the VCGCB with future versions of the brochures. The five brochures created or revised to date are listed below:

Compensation for Victims of Violent Crime Brochure—This brochure provides general information to help victims of violent crime understand the compensation process. The claims application is enclosed within the brochure.

Victim Compensation: Your Right to Appeal Brochure—This new brochure explains a claimant's right

to appeal decisions made by the Victim Compensation Program.

Restitution for Victims Brochure—This brochure explains restitution, how it works, and what a crime victim might need to know to obtain a restitution order.

Your Restitution Responsibilities: A Brochure for Adult and Juvenile Offenders—This brochure was

developed for probation officers and correctional officers to distribute to offenders. It explains an offender's responsibility to pay restitution to the victim.

Law-Enforcement Job Aid: Help for Victims of Crime—This pocket-sized publication, which is slightly larger than a business card, was created to assist law enforcement when helping crime victims, so they can begin the compensation process.



New VCGCB Publications

It is important to have an application available for claimants that is easy to understand and complete. In addition to the brochures, the VCGCB has developed a new application that incorporates both English and Spanish into one form.

To aid our claimants and provide better customer service, additional publications will be available in the spring of 2006. These upcoming brochures will address topics such as mental health treatment and the VCGCB's government claims process.

Victims of Crime Act Appropriations Authorized



On November 22, President George W. Bush signed the 2006 Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The law, which sets funding levels for Department of Justice programs, rejected the proposed rescission of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds and set the cap on the VOCA Fund at \$625 million for Fiscal Year 2006. The legislation increased funding for transitional housing from \$12.5 million to \$15 million. It also provides \$9 million to continue the State Automated Victim Notification grant program. The legislation also made a number of small cuts for violence against women grant programs, including a \$1.5 million reduction in STOP (Services, Training, Officers and Prosecution) grant funding. The STOP grant program is the largest program funded under the Department of Justice Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). STOP grants help communities develop and sustain a coordinated response to domestic violence by funding training for law enforcement, special domestic violence units in prosecutor's offices and victim services.

Compensation Seminars for Victim Advocates

Communication with victim advocates is critical to maintaining the partnership between the VCGCB and Victim Witness Centers throughout California. VCGCB staff appreciate the difficulties victim advocates face on a daily basis. Anita Ahuja, Manager of VCGCB's Policy and Training Section states, "Victim advocates are ambassadors. They're on the front lines working with victims of crime. We want to provide all the tools we can to help them do their jobs."

To support and better assist the victim advocates with their valuable role of helping victims of crime, the VCGCB's Policy and Training Section developed a compensation seminar for victim advocates. This compensation seminar includes a brief overview of the Victim Compensation Program, eligibility, basic benefit limits, relocation document review and new legislation.

"The training gave me updated, new information that will greatly assist advocates with providing accurate information and assistance to victims."

The seminar highlights 2005 policy changes and revisions to the new policy manual. One of the featured revisions in the manual is the new vehicle insurance policy that was part of last October's revision. The seminar also covers different types of losses and how to help victims receive compensation for those losses.

This compensation seminar was hosted by Kathryn Showers, Director of the Los Angeles County District Attorney Victim Witness Center on September 27. A total of 70 victim advocates attended.

On November 29, Melody Horrell, Staff Services Analyst in the VCGCB's Policy and Training Section, provided the second compensation seminar in Napa. She was accompanied by Lana Kasyanchik, a VCGCB Victim Compensation Specialist. Gayle O'Kelley, Napa Victim Witness Program Coordinator, requested the training after hearing of the first presentation

in Los Angeles in September. A total of 17 victim advocates attended the training from Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa and Sonoma Counties.

Melody enjoys providing training to the victim witness centers throughout California. "Working together, I think we can be more effective to help the victims," she said.

The positive comments from attendees showed the importance of this type of training. According to one attendee, "The training gave me updated, new information that will greatly assist advocates with providing accurate information and assistance to victims." Another said, "It was helpful to have the ear and expertise for a day of VCGCB employees. New information was very helpful." Because of the positive feedback from victim advocates, the VCGCB Policy and Training Section will be scheduling additional Victim Advocate Training sessions in 2006.

To schedule a compensation seminar in your county, please contact Anita Ahuja, Manager of the Policy and Training Unit, at (916) 445-8452 or by e-mail at ahuja@vcgcb.ca.gov.



Melody Horrell, Staff Services Analyst, Policy & Training Section

Training & Technical Assistance Available



The Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVC TTAC) provides instruction and assistance in the areas

of program design and implementation, strategic planning, program management, evaluation, quality improvement, collaboration, and community coordination. Training is provided online and at locations throughout the United States by consultants with knowledge in the field of victim services. Events, meetings and training courses, some specifically geared to assist victim service providers, can also be viewed online via a calendar available on OVC TTAC's web site at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/assist/events.html.

Criminal Restitution Compact Representatives Meeting

One of the strategies the VCGCB uses to help facilitate restitution collection is to implement Criminal Restitution Compact (CRC) agreements with District Attorneys' offices. In these agreements, District Attorneys' Office employees are assigned to collect restitution information and prepare it for sentencing hearings. Laura Hill, Deputy Executive Officer, said, "These partnerships are the key



Laura Hill, Laura Jestes & Kim Glazzard, RRAD

to our success. When we keep restitution funds flowing, we are able to continue helping crime victims."

To help the CRC representatives do this very important work, the Revenue Recovery and Accounting Division (RRAD) coordinated the

CRC Representatives' Quarterly Meeting on November 30 and December 1. In attendance were 29 CRC representatives from 19 counties.

In a departure from past meetings, each county gave a presentation about their county's demographics, unique challenges, and successful approaches to obtaining, monitoring and modifying restitution orders for VCGCB and crime victims. Colin Arblaster, a Restitution Technician for Santa Clara County, appreciated this addition to the agenda.



Sandra Perez & Jeanetta Ringhoffer, San Bernardino County

He said, "It helped me hear how other counties approach their tasks." Arblaster valued the open forum and roundtable discussion that resulted, bringing out new ideas and methodologies to handle challenges he and other counties face on a daily basis.

In addition to presentations by VCGCB staff, Jennifer Shaffer, Assistant Secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), provided an overview of the newly reorganized CDCR organization chart and introduced some of her management staff. They provided valuable information about their victim services, which included information regarding a new DVD being developed. The DVD, first in the U.S., will educate parolees. The DVD will inform parolees about their restitution obligations and remind them of other legal requirements associated with parole. Assistant Secretary Shaffer was pleased to report that CDCR began collecting restitution in 1992 and that the \$100 million collected mark will be reached in December.

"These partnerships are the key to our success. When we keep restitution funds flowing, we are able to continue helping crime victims."

Also on hand at the meeting was VCGCB's Executive Officer Karen McGagin, Chief Deputy Executive Officer Tom O'Connor, and Deputy Executive Officer Laura Hill to provide opening remarks and answer questions.

On December 2, Ken Ryken, Deputy District Attorney for the Alameda County Restitution Recovery Unit, invited participants to observe the restitution court held every Friday morning in Alameda County. Alameda County Superior Court Judge Vernon Nakahara calls offenders into court on Fridays to amend restitution orders, hear progress reports on payments, and revoke their probation for non-payment if necessary.



Ken Ryken, DDA, Alameda County

Training and Technical Assistance News



The "Crime Victims Fund Report: Past, Present, and Future" is now available. The report includes historical information on amounts deposited into the Crime Victims Fund through various sources, how those deposits have been used, changes that have had an overall impact on Fund resources, and trends in revenues and expenditures that could result in severe reductions in funding levels. For more information, download the report at www.navaa.org/CVFReport/CrimeVictimsReport.pdf.

VCGCB Executive Officer Elected to National Compensation Association Board

Karen McGagin, Executive Officer, was elected to the board of the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards (NACVCB) at the 2005 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) National Training Conference. She is one of 12 members on the NACVCB Board and will serve a three-year term. Karen and Tom O'Connor, Chief Deputy Executive Officer, attended the conference, "What Works: Improving Results for Victims," in Albuquerque, New Mexico, from November 3 to November 6. This annual conference affords an opportunity for program directors from across the nation and federal VOCA administrators to meet and discuss

new trends and developing issues in compensation. Workshops included presentations on compensation program challenges, staff development, strategic planning, mental health issues, and international victim services, among many other topics. There was also a special round-table for large state compensation programs: California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington. The round-table discussion allows programs from these states to share successful strategies and explore current issues.



New Information Security Officer Joins the VCGCB

The VCGCB welcomes Gary G. Hummel as our new Information Security Officer (ISO). Hummel, who joins the Board on December 19, was most recently the ISO at the California Student Aid Commission. He is a Certified Information Systems Security Professional with twenty years of experience in the field of information technology.

The ISO will work with Debra Gonzales, the VCGCB's Chief Information Officer, to ensure that data entrusted to the VCGCB by claimants and providers is protected. The ISO will review and audit security procedures and State requirements to ensure compliance, as well as develop and maintain the VCGCB's operational recovery and software management plans.



Mass Casualty Preparedness

No one wants to think about terrorist attacks or natural disasters striking our community, but that's just what the Regional Office of Homeland Security and the Sacramento Region Citizen Corps Council were thinking about when they planned an emergency preparedness exercise on November 15, 2005. Local, state and federal agencies responded to volunteers who acted as victims at multiple simulated terrorist attacks and natural disaster scenarios throughout the Sacramento region in order to learn about emergency preparedness.

Community agencies met on November 29-30, 2005, to discuss the recovery and mitigation period that would follow mass casualty scenarios. Afzal Rashid, Staff Services Manager II for Quality Assurance Mental Health and Joint Powers, attended as the representative for

VCGCB. Attendees split into groups to determine recovery issues and challenges, identify resources, and outline emergency preparedness priorities.

The entire exercise, from simulated terrorist attacks and natural disaster scenarios to recovery and mitigation, will be held again in 2006. These exercises will help update the blueprint of coordinated emergency response for the State of California.

Since 2001, the VCGCB has been working regularly with the Office of Emergency Services Law Enforcement and Victim Services Division to establish a mass casualty protocol for victim services, including compensation. The protocol has been helpful several times, most recently to assist victims of the Glendale train derailment earlier this year.

Grants.gov



More than 1,000 grant programs offered by the 26 Federal grant-making agencies are now searchable through Grants.gov beginning Fiscal Year 2006. These grants are available to state, local and tribal governments, universities and research institutions, and non-profit agencies. By accessing this website, victim witness centers can search for and sign up to receive email notifications of grant opportunities, as well as prepare and submit grant applications for those grants that may be applicable. Over \$400 billion in grants are awarded each year. To search for grants, access Grants.gov at www.grants.gov.